

For Immediate Release – Advocates Release Min. Wage Poll Data

For more information contact Taylor Leake at (860) 670-1408 or tleake@workingfamilies.org.

HARTFORD, CT – On Monday, March 28th, advocates for fair wages in CT presented new polling data on SB391 and raising the minimum wage. The press conference was at the Legislative Office Building. Polling data, conducted by Abacus, was presented by pollster Mark Watts.

We are facing major budget cuts, cuts to services that many low wage earners need to survive. If legislators passed SB391, an estimated \$305M could be put back in our economy. Not only would this help offset the burden on taxpayers, it would create additional revenue; thus, eliminating the perpetual cycle of budget cuts that affect our most vulnerable, hardworking citizens.

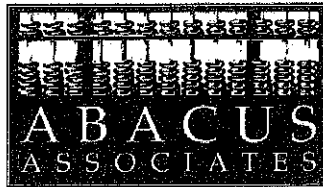
“Our government leaves us taxpayers to pick up the pieces when we subsidize corporations’ poor wages every year. We absolutely must hold corporations to pay their fair share seeking an economy that works for everyone. We need not subject ourselves to an annual budget crisis when there are plausible solutions like SB391,” charged Lindsay Farrell, Executive Director of Connecticut Working Families.

The polling data shows that SB391 and raising the minimum wage has broad support across the state. The data also shows that a vast majority of low wage workers in our state aren’t teenagers or college students, but hardworking parents trying to raise their families. In a time when Connecticut’s economy is in dire straits, taxpayers subsidize these poverty wages. SB391 is the remedy to the tumultuous budget crises we experience every year, where the future of thousands are at stake.

Paul Filson, Director of SEIU Connecticut State Council, praised the bill as a viable solution to Connecticut’s fiscal calamity, “Critical public services are cut to balance a budget that is caused, in part, by huge profitable corporations paying their workers starvation wages. SB391 uses a creative approach, by holding rich companies accountable and would generate millions of dollars of revenue. This is a solution that will help Connecticut’s economy.”

Connecticut must join the growing, national chorus for fair wages across the board, and that starts with corporations paying their fair share. The math is simple: if you have a fair wage, median income goes up; and subsequently, more money will go into the state’s economy. We must create an economy that works for everyone, and that starts by raising the wages of its lowest paid workers, and corporations paying their fair share.

###



To: Interested Parties
From: Mark Watts, President of Abacus Associates
Date: March 15, 2016
Re: Strong support for a \$15 minimum wage in Connecticut

From February 25 to February 29, 2016, Abacus Associates conducted a survey of 400 random voters. The survey measured voter support for a \$15 minimum wage and tested the best message in support of that wage. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.9 percent. This memorandum reports on the key findings from the survey and offers a recommendation for the best messages to support it.

SUPPORT FOR A \$15 MINIMUM WAGE

As described in more detail below, the survey found very strong support among Connecticut voters for two important concepts:

(1) By a margin of more than 3-to-1, Connecticut voters feel that the Governor and State Legislature should address the problem of businesses paying wages so low that their employees must rely on Connecticut taxpayer-funded programs to meet their families' basic needs.

(2) A solid majority of Connecticut voters – 61 percent – support raising the Connecticut minimum wage to \$15 by 2022.

First, we found that by a margin of more than 3-to-1 (77 percent to 18 percent), voters want the Governor and the State Legislature to address the problem of businesses paying wages so low that their employees must rely on Connecticut taxpayer-funded programs to meet their families' basic needs like food, housing, child care, and health care.

- Support for the concept that elected leaders should address this problem is especially high among registered Democrats (84 percent), women (74 percent), voters under 50 years of age (79 percent), and voters not registered with either major party (71 percent).

Second, we asked voters if they support addressing this problem by phasing in a \$15 minimum wage over the next six years:

Right now the minimum wage in Connecticut is nine dollars and sixty cents, and it is already set to increase to ten dollars and ten cents in 2017. The new proposal is to increase the minimum wage by a dollar each year after 2017, starting with 2018, until it reaches 15 dollars in the year 2022. So while this is a fifteen-dollar minimum wage proposal, the increase will happen gradually over time and the actual minimum wage would not reach 15 dollars for another six years. Do you favor or oppose this 15-dollar minimum wage proposal?

A solid majority of Connecticut voters (61 percent) favor this proposed \$15 minimum wage, with only 36 percent opposing it.

- Registered Democrats show the strongest support for the \$15 minimum wage (75 percent).
- Women favor the \$15 minimum wage by a wide margin of over 34 points (66 percent to 32 percent).
- Similarly, voters under 50 years of age favor the \$15 minimum wage by a wide margin (68 percent to 30 percent).
- Voters not registered with either major party also favor the \$15 minimum wage by a very solid margin (62 percent to 35 percent).

REASONS VOTERS SUPPORT A \$15 MINIMUM WAGE

After measuring voters' solid support for a \$15 minimum wage, we asked their opinion on various arguments in favor of the proposal.

The **strongest arguments** make the case that:

- (1) Workers paid wages too low to live on end up relying on government assistance, and taxpayers should not have to subsidize businesses that pay poverty-level wages;**
- (2) The minimum wage has not kept up with inflation and the cost of living in Connecticut, and raising it to \$15 by 2022 will get it back to the level it needs to be at; and**
- (3) The vast majority of employees who receive these wages are adults – including moms with children – who need to earn wages that can cover the cost of living;**
- (4) The economy grows when working families earn more money, since these families will spend to meet their basic needs, supporting businesses and creating more jobs in the state.**

The following are the specific arguments that Connecticut voters find the most convincing:

VOTERS AGREE THAT TAXPAYERS SHOULD NOT BE SUBSIDIZING BUSINESSES THAT PAY THEIR WORKERS POVERTY-LEVEL WAGES

- *Economic research shows that when workers are paid wages too low to live on, they end up relying on government assistance. In the end, it is the taxpayers who have to pay. We should not have to spend tax dollars to subsidize businesses that pay their workers poverty-level wages (71 percent say this is a convincing reason to support a \$15 minimum wage).*

VOTERS UNDERSTAND THAT THE MINIMUM WAGE HAS NOT KEPT UP WITH INFLATION AND IS NO LONGER SUFFICIENT FOR KEEPING WORKING FAMILIES OUT OF POVERTY

- *The minimum wage was meant to keep working people out of poverty, but it has not kept up with inflation over the past few decades. Today, someone working fulltime at a minimum wage is forced to live in poverty and does not earn enough to support their family. A 15-dollar an hour wage is designed to get us back to a minimum wage that is a livable wage for full time workers (69 percent say this is a convincing reason to support a \$15 minimum wage).*

VOTERS BELIEVE THAT LOW-WAGE WORKING FAMILIES, WHICH INCLUDE MOMS WITH CHILDREN, SHOULD EARN WAGES THEY CAN LIVE ON

- *Almost two-out-of-three Americans who work in jobs that pay the minimum wage are women. That includes millions of working moms and single moms. By increasing their wages, we make it easier to cover the basic needs of many moms and their children (70 percent say this is a convincing reason to support a \$15 minimum wage).*
- *The overwhelming majority of employees who are making these lower wages in Connecticut are adults - not teens - with families and in households where their low wages are the only source of income (68 percent say this is a convincing reason to support a \$15 minimum wage).*

VOTERS AGREE THAT THE ECONOMY GROWS WHEN FAMILIES HAVE WAGES SUFFICIENT TO LIVE ON

- *Economic research makes it clear that increasing the minimum wage grows the local economy, by putting more money in the pockets of working families who need it. These are families who will spend this money locally, support local businesses, and create even more jobs in the state (69 percent say this is a convincing reason to support a \$15 minimum wage).*



To: Interested Parties
From: Mark Watts, President of Abacus Associates
Date: March 9, 2015
Re: Strong support and clear direction for low wage employer fee in Connecticut

From February 23 to February 26, 2015, Abacus Associates conducted a survey of 400 random voters. The survey measured voter support for a proposed low wage employer fee and tested the best message in support of that fee. The margin of error is plus or minus 4.9%. This memo reports on the key findings from the survey and offers a recommendation for the best messages to support it.

SUPPORT FOR LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS FEE

The key result of this survey is that there is very strong support among Connecticut voters for the Governor and State Legislature to address the problem of large corporations paying their employees wages so low that they must rely on Connecticut taxpayer funded programs to meet their needs. More specifically, there is strong support for a Low Wage Employer Fee, especially one that would fund the childcare and health care that working families need to get and stay in the workforce.

By a margin of nearly 3-to-1 (71% to 25%), voters want the Governor and the State Legislature to find ways to address the issue of “big, profitable corporations that pay low wages. The low wages result in employees relying on Connecticut taxpayer funded programs to meet the basics like food, housing, and health care for their families.”

- Support for elected leaders addressing this issue was especially high among registered Democrats (83 percent), among women of both parties (74 percent), and among voters who are not registered with either major party (73 percent).

We asked voters if they support addressing this issue through a Low Wage Employer Fee:

Requiring the largest, for-profit corporations in Connecticut, those with at least five hundred employees, to pay a fee of one dollar per hour, for every hour worked by one of their employees whose wages are less than fifteen dollars an hour. The money raised by this fee must be used to help pay for state subsidies for child care and the health care that employees who are earning such low wages need to get by.

A solid majority of Connecticut voters (60 percent) favor this proposed Low Wage Employer Fee.

- Registered Democrats show the strongest support for this proposal (74 percent).

- Women of both parties favor the fee by a wide margin of over 30 points (64 percent to 33 percent).
- Voters who are not registered with either major party also favor the idea by a solid margin (58 percent to 40 percent).

VOTERS STRONGLY BELIEVE LEGISLATORS SHOULD DIRECT ANY REVENUES FROM A LOW WAGE EMPLOYER FEE TO HEALTHCARE AND CHILD CARE PRIORITIES

- A key part of voter support for this proposal is knowing that the money is going to help pay for state subsidies for child care and the health care that low-wage employees need to get by. The margin of voter support for the Low Wage Employer Fee jumped 17 percent when voters were informed that money raised from the fee would go to subsidize health care and child care for low wage employees.
- Voters strongly believe the state should help subsidize affordable, safe, child care to make it easier for parents to enter the workforce and stay in it, so they can earn a better living and be less dependent on social services (71 percent).

REASONS VOTERS SUPPORT LOW WAGE EMPLOYERS FEE

After measuring their solid support for the Low Wage Employer Fee, we asked voters for their opinion on various arguments in favor of the proposal.

The strongest arguments fit into three basic categories: 1) **These large corporations are making very big profits and need to take responsibility for paying a wage their employees can live on;** 2) **Low wage families—especially single moms—should get the child care and healthcare services they need;** and 3) **Connecticut's citizens should not have to subsidize these profitable, large corporations who pay such low wages that their employees must rely on state services to cover their basic needs.**

These are the arguments Connecticut voters find the most convincing:

VOTERS STRONGLY BELIEVE PROFITABLE CORPORATIONS SHOULD PAY EMPLOYEES A WAGE THEY CAN LIVE ON

- *Corporations, especially those that are highly profitable—like Walmart and McDonalds—should be responsible for paying their employees a wage the employees can live on (76 percent say it is a convincing reason to support).*

VOTERS BELIEVE THAT LOW-WAGE WORKING FAMILIES —ESPECIALLY SINGLE MOMS—SHOULD GET THE CHILD CARE AND HEALTHCARE SERVICES THEY NEED

- *Almost two-out-of-three Americans who work in jobs that pay the minimum wage are women. That includes millions of working moms and single moms. By creating this fee we make it easier to cover the basic needs of many moms and their children (72 percent).*

- *The overwhelming majority of employees who are making these lower wages in Connecticut are adults—not teens—with families and in households where their low wages are the only source of income (72 percent).*
- *While this proposed low-wage employer fee will make a big difference in funding social services for working families, it will only cost big corporations less than one percent of the profits they generate in Connecticut each year. They can certainly afford it (69 percent).*

VOTERS DISLIKE SUBSIDIZING BIG CORPORATIONS WHO PAY SUCH LOW WAGES THAT THEIR EMPLOYEES NEED TO RELY ON STATE SERVICES TO COVER THE BASICS

- *Big corporations like Walmart and McDonalds have a choice—they can either start paying their employees decently or pay Connecticut for the support we provide to our working families who need help to meet the basics (72 percent).*
- *Connecticut's middle class families are subsidizing these highly profitable corporations like Walmart and McDonalds. We are the ones who have to pay for the subsidies in health care, child care, and other services for the employees they are not paying sufficiently. We should not be subsidizing the profits these big corporations are making (69 percent).*